

VFW Student And Teacher Award Programs

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Veteran of Foreign Wars (VFW) posts across the nation are gearing up for two youth scholarship programs and a program to recognize teachers. The youth scholarship programs are the Patriot's Pen essay contest for 6th-8th grades and the Voice of Democracy spoken essay contest for grades 9-12. Home schooled youth are also welcome to submit entries in their appropriate grade level categories. The program to recognize teachers is the Smart/Maher Citizenship Education Teacher award for classroom teachers who promote citizenship education as part of their teaching curriculum. Cutoff for entries for each of the contests is October 31, 2020.

Competition for these contests begin at the local post level. Post winners advance to a district competition and the first place district winner advance to the state competition. All Voice of Democracy and Patriot Pen state winners receive an expense paid trip to Washington, D.C. For Patriot Pen winners, a parent or guardian is also paid for.

Annually, the VFW provides more than \$2 million in scholarships. Each year, approximately 57,000 students nationally participate in the program. State winners in the Patriot Pen contest compete at the national level for a total of \$55,000 in awards, and the national first place winner receives \$5,000 and the Illinois first place winner earns \$2,500. Each year, around 120,000 students participate nationwide.

The Voice of Democracy Oratorical Contest theme for 2020- 2021, “Is This the Country the Founders Envisioned?” Students in grades 9-12 must write and record an original three-to-five minute essay on the theme on an audio CD or flash drive and present their recording, typed essay, and completed entry form to their local VFW post. Additional information, entry applications and rules may be found at <https://www.vfw.org/vod>

For the Patriot’s Pen essay competition, students in grades 6-8 have the opportunity to compete in the VFW’s annual essay competition and win thousands of dollars. Students are invited to write an original 300-400 word essay on the theme of "What is Patriotism to Me?" and submit it to their local post. <https://www.vfw.org/patriotspen>, scroll down for information.

Nominations for the Smart/Maher VFW Citizenship Education Teacher Award come from fellow teachers, students, supervisors or other interested individuals who wish to recognize a teacher for their passion, innovation and resources used in presenting citizenship education in the classroom. After entries work their way through post, district and state competitions, three teachers, one from each grade level of K-5, 6-8 and 9-12 are selected as national winners. In addition to receiving a plaque recognizing their achievement, National winners receive \$1,000 for their own professional development and \$1,000 for their school, plus an all expenses paid trip to the VFW’s National Convention in July 2021. Teachers are nominated and entries sent to a local VFW post for competition. Post winners advance to the district level, district winners compete in the state competition. State winners compete in the national competition. Additional details on the program and nomination procedures may be found at <https://www.vfw.org/teacheroftheyear>.

VFW post contact information may be found at www.vfw.org by using the link from the menu "Find a Post." Select the link, then enter your zip code, press Go! and select a post closest to you.